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| **Allegory --** A symbolic narrative in which the surface details imply a secondary meaning. Allegory often takes the form of a story in which the characters represent moral qualities. The most famous example in English is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which the name of the central character, Pilgrim, epitomizes the book's allegorical nature. Kay Boyle's story "Astronomer's Wife" and Christina Rossetti's poem "Up-Hill" both contain allegorical elements.  **Alliteration --** The repetition of consonant sounds, especially at the beginning of words. Example: "Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood." Hopkins, "In the Valley of the Elwy."  **Allusion** – A reference to another work of art of literature, or to a person, place, or event outside the text.  **Antagonist --** A character or force against which another character struggles. Creon is Antigone's antagonist in Sophocles' play *Antigone*; Teiresias is the antagonist of Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.  **Assonance --** The repetition of similar vowel sounds in a sentence or a line of poetry or prose, as in "I rose and told him of my woe." Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" contains assonantal "I's" in the following lines: "How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick, / Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself."  **Ballad --** A [narrative poem](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#narrative_poem) written in four-line [stanzas](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#stanza), characterized by swift action and narrated in a direct style. The Anonymous medieval ballad, "Barbara Allan," exemplifies the genre.  **Blank verse --** A line of poetry or prose in unrhymed [iambic pentameter](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#iamb). Shakespeare's sonnets, Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, and Robert Frost's meditative poems such as "Birches" include many lines of blank verse. Here are the opening blank verse lines of "Birches": When I see birches bend to left and right / Across the lines of straighter darker trees, / I like to think some boy's been swinging them.  **Caesura --** A strong pause within a line of verse. The following stanza from Hardy's "The Man He Killed" contains caesuras in the middle two lines: He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,  Off-hand-like--just as I--  Was out of work-had sold his traps--  No other reason why.  **Characterization --** The means by which writers present and reveal character. Although techniques of characterization are complex, writers typically reveal characters through their speech, dress, manner, and actions. Readers come to understand the character Miss Emily in Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" through what she says, how she lives, and what she does.  **Conflict --** A struggle between opposing forces in a story or play, usually resolved by the end of the work. The conflict may occur within a character as well as between characters. Lady Gregory's one-act play *The Rising of the Moon* exemplifies both types of conflict as the Policeman wrestles with his conscience in an inner conflict and confronts an antagonist in the person of the ballad singer.  **Connotation --** The associations called up by a word that goes beyond its dictionary meaning. Poets, especially, tend to use words rich in connotation. Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" includes intensely connotative language, as in these lines: "Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright / Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, / Rage, rage against the dying of the light."    **Couplet --** A pair of rhymed lines that may or may not constitute a separate [stanza](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#stanza) in a poem. Shakespeare's sonnets end in rhymed couplets, as in "For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings / That then I scorn to change my state with kings."  **Dactyl --** A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones, as in *FLUT-ter-ing* or *BLUE-ber-ry*. The following playful lines illustrate double dactyls, two dactyls per line:  Higgledy, piggledy, Emily Dickinson Gibbering, jabbering.  **Denotation --** The dictionary meaning of a word. Writers typically play off a word's denotative meaning against its connotations, or suggested and implied associational implications. In the following lines from Peter Meinke's "Advice to My Son" the references to flowers and fruit, bread and wine denote specific things, but also suggest something beyond the literal, dictionary meanings of the words:  To be specific, between the peony and rose Plant squash and spinach, turnips and tomatoes; Beauty is nectar and nectar, in a desert, saves-- ... and always serve bread with your wine. But, son, always serve wine.  **Diction --** The selection of words in a literary work. A work's diction forms one of its centrally important literary elements, as writers use words to convey action, reveal character, imply attitudes, identify themes, and suggest values. We can speak of the diction particular to a character, as in Iago's and Desdemona's very different ways of speaking in *Othello*. We can also refer to a poet's diction as represented over the body of his or her work, as in Donne's or Hughes's diction.  **Elegy --** A [lyric poem](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#lyric_poem) that laments the dead. Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays" is elegiac in tone. A more explicitly identified elegy is W.H. Auden's "In Memory of William Butler Yeats" and his "Funeral Blues."  **Epic --** A long [narrative poem](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#narrative_poem) that records the adventures of a hero. Epics typically chronicle the origins of a civilization and embody its central values. Examples from western literature include Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.  **Epigram --** A brief witty poem, often satirical. Alexander Pope's "Epigram Engraved on the Collar of a Dog" exemplifies the genre: I am his Highness' dog at Kew;  Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?  **Figurative language --** A form of language use in which writers and speakers convey something other than the literal meaning of their words. Examples include hyperbole or exaggeration, litotes or understatement, simile and metaphor, which employ comparison, and synecdoche and metonymy, in which a part of a thing stands for the whole.  **Foot --** A [metrical](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#meter) unit composed of stressed and unstressed syllables. For example, an iamb or iambic foot is represented by ˘*'*, that is, an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one. Frost's line "Whose woods these are I think I know" contains four iambs, and is thus an iambic foot.  **Free verse --** Poetry without a regular pattern of [meter](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#meter) or rhyme. The verse is "free" in not being bound by earlier poetic conventions requiring poems to adhere to an explicit and identifiable meter and rhyme scheme in a form such as the sonnet or ballad. Modern and contemporary poets of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries often employ free verse. Williams's "This Is Just to Say" is one of many examples.  **Hyperbole --** A figure of speech involving exaggeration. John Donne uses hyperbole in his poem: "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star."  **Iamb --** An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, as in *to-DAY*.  **Image --** A concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling, or an idea. Imagery refers to the pattern of related details in a work. In some works one image predominates either by recurring throughout the work or by appearing at a critical point in the plot. Often writers use multiple images throughout a work to suggest states of feeling and to convey implications of thought and action. Some modern poets, such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, write poems that lack discursive explanation entirely and include only images. Among the most famous examples is Pound's poem "In a Station of the Metro":  The apparition of these faces in the crowd; Petals on a wet, black bough.  **Imagery --** The pattern of related comparative aspects of language, particularly of images, in a literary work. Imagery of light and darkness pervade James Joyce's stories "Araby," "The Boarding House," and "The Dead." So, too, does religious imagery.  **Irony --** A contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant or between what happens and what is expected to happen in life and in literature. In verbal irony, characters say the opposite of what they mean. In irony of circumstance or situation, the opposite of what is expected occurs. In dramatic irony, a character speaks in ignorance of a situation or event known to the audience or to the other characters. Flannery O'Connor's short stories employ all these forms of irony, as does Poe's "Cask of Amontillado."  **Lyric poem --** A type of poem characterized by brevity, compression, and the expression of feeling. Most of the poems in this book are lyrics. The anonymous "Western Wind" epitomizes the genre:  Western wind, when will thou blow, The small rain down can rain? Christ, if my love were in my arms And I in my bed again!  **Metaphor --** A comparison between essentially unlike things without an explicitly comparative word such as *like* or *as*. An example is "My love is a red, red rose,"  From Burns's "A Red, Red Rose." Langston Hughes's "Dream Deferred" is built entirely of metaphors. Metaphor is one of the most important of literary uses of language. Shakespeare employs a wide range of metaphor in his sonnets and his plays, often in such density and profusion that readers are kept busy analyzing and interpreting and unraveling them. Compare [*Simile*](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#simile).  **Meter --** The measured pattern of rhythmic accents in poems.  **Narrative poem --** A poem that tells a story.  **Octave --** An eight-line unit, which may constitute a [stanza](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#stanza); or a section of a poem, as in the octave of a [sonnet](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#sonnet).  **Ode --** A long, stately poem in [stanzas](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#stanza) of varied length, [meter](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#meter), and form. Usually a serious poem on an exalted subject, such as Horace's "Eheu fugaces," but sometimes a more lighthearted work, such as Neruda's "Ode to My Socks."  **Onomatopoeia --** The use of words to imitate the sounds they describe. Words such as *buzz* and *crack* are onomatopoetic. The following line from Pope's "Sound and Sense" onomatopoetically imitates in sound what it describes:  When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw, The line too labors, and the words move slow.  Most often, however, onomatopoeia refers to words and groups of words, such as Tennyson's description of the "murmur of innumerable bees," which attempts to capture the sound of a swarm of bees buzzing.  **Parody --** A humorous, mocking imitation of a literary work, sometimes sarcastic, but often playful and even respectful in its playful imitation. Examples include Bob McKenty's parody of Frost's "Dust of Snow" and Kenneth Koch's parody of Williams's "This is Just to Say."  **Personification --** The endowment of inanimate objects or abstract concepts with animate or living qualities. An example: "The yellow leaves flaunted their color gaily in the breeze." Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" includes personification.  **Point of view --** The angle of vision from which a story is narrated. A work's point of view can be: first person, in which the narrator is a character or an observer, respectively; objective, in which the narrator knows or appears to know no more than the reader; omniscient, in which the narrator knows everything about the characters; and limited omniscient, which allows the narrator to know some things about the characters but not everything.  **Quatrain --** A four-line [stanza](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#stanza) in a poem, the first four lines and the second four lines in a Petrachan sonnet. A Shakespearean sonnet contains three quatrains followed by a couplet.  **Rhyme --** The matching of final vowel or consonant sounds in two or more words. The following stanza of "Richard Cory" employs alternate rhyme, with the third line rhyming with the first and the fourth with the second:  Whenever Richard Cory went down town, We people on the pavement looked at him; He was a gentleman from sole to crown Clean favored and imperially slim.  **Rhythm --** The recurrence of accent or stress in lines of verse. In the following lines from "Same in Blues" by Langston Hughes, the accented words and syllables are underlined:  I said to my baby, Baby take it slow.... Lulu said to Leonard I want a diamond ring  **Sestet --** A six-line unit of verse constituting a [stanza](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#stanza) or section of a poem; the last six lines of an Italian [sonnet](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#sonnet). Examples: Petrarch's "If it is not love, then what is it that I feel," and Frost's "Design."  **Simile --** A figure of speech involving a comparison between unlike things using *like*, *as*, or *as though*. An example: "My love is like a red, red rose."  **Sonnet --** A fourteen-line poem in [iambic pentameter](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#iamb). The Shakespearean or English sonnet is arranged as three [quatrains](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#quatrain) and a final [couplet](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#couplet), rhyming abab cdcd efef gg. The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet divides into two parts: an eight-line octave and a six-line sestet, rhyming abba abba cde cde or abba abba cd cd cd.  **Stanza --** A division or unit of a poem that is repeated in the same form--either with similar or identical patterns or rhyme and [meter](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#meter), or with variations from one stanza to another. The stanzas of Gertrude Schnackenberg's "Signs" are regular; those of Rita Dove's "Canary" are irregular.  **Symbol --** An object or action in a literary work that means more than itself, that stands for something beyond itself. The glass unicorn in *The Glass Menagerie*, the rocking horse in "The Rocking-Horse Winner," the road in Frost's "The Road Not Taken"--all are symbols in this sense.  **Synecdoche --** A figure of speech in which a part is substituted for the whole. An example: "Lend me a hand."  **Syntax --** The grammatical order of words in a sentence or line of verse or dialogue. The organization of words and phrases and clauses in sentences of prose, verse, and dialogue. In the following example, normal syntax (subject, verb, object order) is inverted:  "Whose woods these are I think I know."  **Tercet --** A three-line [stanza](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#stanza), as the stanzas in Frost's "Acquainted With the Night" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." The three-line stanzas or sections that together constitute the sestet of a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet.  **Tone --** The implied attitude of a writer toward the subject and characters of a work, as, for example, Flannery O'Connor's ironic tone in her "Good Country People."  **Trochee --** An accented syllable followed by an unaccented one, as in *FOOT-ball*.  **Understatement --** A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker says less than what he or she means; the opposite of exaggeration. The last line of Frost's "Birches" illustrates this literary device: "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches."  **Villanelle --** A nineteen-line lyric poem that relies heavily on repetition. The first and third lines alternate throughout the poem, which is structured in six [stanzas](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#stanza) --five [tercets](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#tercet) and a concluding [quatrain](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/poetic_glossary.html#quatrain). Examples include Bishop's "One Art," Roethke's "The Waking," and Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night." |